

Sunday 10 May 2020

The paper-version Service



For now, we cannot meet in the building – but the church is still open!

All of our services are on-line www.goodshepherdfourmarks.org.uk but we're producing this weekly sheet which captures our Sunday service for those who can't access the internet.

To Begin: Grab a Bible. If safe, perhaps light a candle. Find a comfortable place and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the modern song from this Sunday's Service set out below.



Opening Prayer: Father God, thank you that you meet with us where we are and invite us in. Thank you that you receive us with loving kindness. We offer ourselves to you, our failures and our joys. We receive your forgiveness and offer our thanks and worship. As we hear from your word, the Bible, help us to receive your peace and know your joy. Help us, full of your Holy Spirit, to declare your love to the world by our deeds and words, to the glory of your name. Amen

Song:

God in my living, there in my breathing.
God in my waking, God in my sleeping.

God in my resting, there in my working.
God in my thinking, God in my speaking.

*Be my everything, be my everything,
Be my everything, be my everything.*

God in my hoping, there in my dreaming.
God in my watching, God in my waiting.

God in my laughing, there in my weeping.
God in my hurting, God in my healing.

*Be my everything, be my everything
Be my everything, be my everything.
Christ in me, Christ in me,
Christ in me, the hope of glory.
You are everything.*

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10.

Living by Grace (a summary of the talk given by Howard Wright):

The Ephesians were people with modern Western-style values, they were self-made, in charge of their own destiny, but with a desperate need of Jesus!

The Ephesians had the temple of Artemis, a Wonder of the ancient World, the largest man-made structure of its time, but Jesus was far above, greater and more majestic. God, through Jesus, is seeking to bring everyone and everything back to himself – a huge project – bigger than anything offered by Artemis or any of the Greek or Roman gods.

We are without hope without Jesus:

Quite rightly we are working to solve this current crisis and defeat the virus. We look for heroes: Nations' leaders offer themselves, some leaders wave to science as the heroes. We find other heroes among the ordinary; NHS and other key workers, or Captain Tom, and these offer light relief – but not a fix.

But even if we fix this, we face a bigger problem! Verse 1 tells us we were dead in our sins! Sin is anything which causes separation between us and God. And, as God is the source of life, separation from him is death, physical and eternal. We looked alive but we were heading for a dead-end.

Verses 2 & 3 hammer this home with different images:

Without Jesus, we were heading the wrong way, completely. We are not as some would tell us, on the same mountain by a different road - we were on the wrong road heading to a different mountain! Other religious leaders, Buddha, for example, say they point the way, Jesus says he is the way and that no-one comes to the Father except by him (John 14:6).

We were in disobedience to God and enslaved to the devil, ruled by our self-confidence, our ungodly passions and pride. This current generation, me included, can be summed up as one taking on the world with self-confidence and pride. Individually and as a society – self-made people! But the whole 'we can do anything we put our mind to' message is shown up as empty. This pandemic has brought our own aspirations to be gods, our own Tower of Babel crashing down.

Most tragically verse 3 ends declaring that through our rejection of God, we were deserving of wrath!

There is a judgement coming, there is a heaven, and there is a hell. Without Jesus, death, physical and eternal, is our end; without Jesus, we are without hope.

Jesus is our Hero: The Greeks loved their heroes: Achilles, Hercules, Jason, Odysseus, Perseus. We loved heroes, the explosion of Marvel superheroes, Spiderman, the Avengers, etc. But none of these died for others in the way of Jesus, none of these rose from the dead, or will necessarily still be popular after Covid-19. And none can fix the ultimate human problem – sin, the separation from God, now and forever.

Verse 4 says: ‘But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.’

Mercy is getting what we did not deserve; Grace is love at no cost to us or, God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.

And it gets better: verse 6 ‘And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...’ We get to join Jesus and join in with him!

Jesus is the hero, the actual Messiah, the Saviour and King. He gives himself to death for us, that we can know life now and forever. This Perfect love of God toward us drives out all fear, of Covid-19, of any disaster, or even death (1 John 4:18).

This life is a gift to all. It is not a prize for being good or nice, we cannot be good enough; it is not a recognition



for hard work – we are broken and cannot be fixed, except by the self-sacrifice of God in Jesus for us.

Sin is a serious business, more serious than Covid-19; sin is eternally deadly. But God has fixed it for us who have received – have you received? If not, then do so today!

Live for Jesus: Verse 10 tells us: ‘For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.’

As Nigel reminded us last week. The people of Ephesus would have had personal shrines to their gods and little figurines of the gods lined up in them – there was quite a trade in these self-made gods, which was threatened by the news of Jesus Christ (See Acts 19). But we are God-made people (or are supposed to be): in the likeness Jesus, declaring the Good News in deeds and words.

We do this by, loving others – our neighbours, especially in this time of crisis. By, living with Jesus as Lord,

submitting every thought, decision and action to him. And by, telling others about Jesus, through sharing on-line church, through Alpha, and

most effectively through sharing our own story of encounter with the real hero, the actual Messiah, with Jesus.

Prayers: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)*

- Pray for the day ahead and its tasks
- Pray for the nations
- Pray for organisations
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends
- Pray for the Church

A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus: Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, COGS, the communities around us and our whole nation. The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV)

The Notices: If you know of others who'd like to receive this, or you'd rather not receive it; or if you find yourself isolated and not able to get neighbours, friends or family to help, then ring Howard, 01420 563344.



Daily HOPE is a new initiative of the Church of England.

A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers